

THE 1551 SIEGE OF GOZO AND THE REPOPULATION OF THE ISLAND

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I have already considered the depopulation of Gozo of 1551 and its aftermath – a central event in Gozitan history – in an earlier paper published in *Melita Historica* of 1986. In that work the principal primary sources utilized have been the notarial and the parochial records. I have since had the opportunity to look into another important source – the Courts records – information which both corroborates the picture that has already emerged as well as supplements it with important details. The *Acta* of the various *Curie* on these islands are not in the best of states of preservation and are very patchy for the period under consideration. Fortunately, however, the Bishops' Curial records are available and a number of cases that involved clerics on Gozo came to be settled in, or had transcripts made for, that tribunal, affording thereby valuable information.

Fifteenth, and early sixteenth-century life on the Maltese Islands was characterized by a protracted series of corsair incursions, increasingly daring in conception and execution and devastating in consequence. It is clear, for example, from the earliest extant *Capitoli* of c. 1410 that Gozo was bearing the brunt of these *razzias* which were reducing it to near-extinction for which reason funds were being sought to build a tower on Comino as a countercheck against the Saracens who were using that island as a hideout and rallying ground.

The arrival in Malta, in 1530, of the Knights Hospitallers, the sworn enemy of the Turk and of his ally, the Barbary corsair, ironically, actually exacerbated the situation because the Ottomans who had ousted the Order from Rhodes in 1522 now turned their eyes to these islands in their

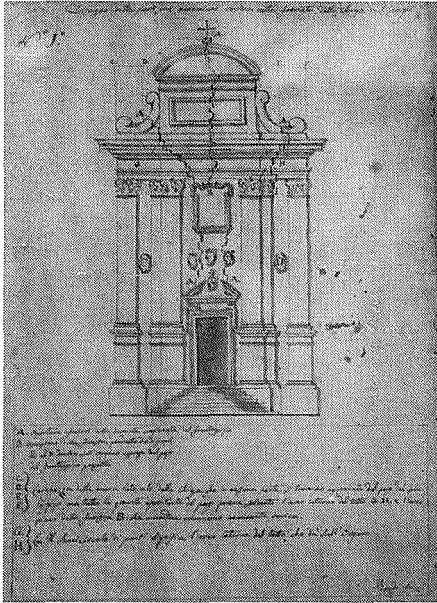
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bid to rid themselves of the Order once and for all and to gain supremacy over the Central Mediterranean. To achieve this end they had to chase the Order out of these islands. After 1530 attacks are recorded with increasing frequency. On Gozo alone, the Order's chronicler Giacomo Bosio, lists incursions in 1533, in 1540, 1541, 1544, 1545, 1546, 1547 and in 1550. The invasion of July 1551 and the Great Siege of 1565 are to be interpreted against the backdrop of this sustained escalation of pressure on the Order.

The all-out attack of 1551 headed by Sinan Pasha and Torghud Ra'is – better known here as Dragut – began with a landing on Malta. They reconnoitred the newly-constructed fortifications of St Angelo and Birgu which they must have assessed to be too strong and too daring for them to attack then. After hovering around Mdina, the armada headed for Gozo and its weakly defended *Castello*. It was, perhaps, a personal score that Dragut needed badly to settle with Gozo – namely the death of his brother during the landing of 1544 – that lent weight in favour of this decision. Bosio describes how the bombardment of the *Castello* began on Friday 24 July, half an hour before noon, and continuing with incessant noise and fire until the following Sunday. The exertions of a lone English bombardier who happened to be in the *Castello* at the time were soon silenced for good and the end became inevitable.

Bosio recounts eye-witness accounts of the finale – “*Dicono e raccontano ancor hoggi di' i vecchi Gozitani con Gran Passione della rovina della Patria loro*” – how the Governor of the island, Fra Galatiano de Sesse, lost control of the situation so that the poor besieged ended up as if they had no leader. Many, availing themselves of windows that punctured the *Castello* walls, sought to escape by climbing down the walls with ropes on the side that was not being attacked. Sunday 26 July saw the end of the tragedy when the doors were opened for the enemy to ransack the fortress. The heroic stand made by a Sicilian soldier who killed his family and died sword in hand to free himself and those dear to him from slavery have not gone unforgotten. The rest – some 700 men and from five to six thousand women and children – were all dragged into slavery with the sole exception of 40 old and decrepit men. The Turk ravaged the rest of the island before setting off with his booty loaded onto the vessels, as legend would have it, at Ras in-Newwiela. Bosio concludes that when the Turks had left, the Grand Master and his Council sent the Order's galleys



The 17th century façade of St. George's Parish Church at Rabat, constructed between 1672 and 1678, during the time of Grand Master Nicolas Cotoner. A church previously standing on the same site was destroyed during the siege of 1551.

to Gozo to salvage any munitions that might have escaped the plunder and the few Gozitans that managed to avoid capture. These returned later to the island when the scare of a renewed attack had abated and settled again under the Governorship of Fra Pietro Olivares who tried to restore the place to the best of his ability. It does not escape Bosio's comment that a multitude of law-suits ensued over the question as to who had the rights over the property left behind by those who had died or who languished in slavery. Special commissioners, he states, were appointed to settle these disputes.

Faced with this description of the state of affairs one can pose various questions, including:

1. What happened to this great multitude of people?
2. How many never made it back to their homeland?
3. Who were the Gozitans that were never captured?
4. Who came back from slavery?
5. How was the island resettled so that within a century the population had attained the pre-1551 level?
6. What became of the captives' property and, in particular, their lands?

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There appears to have been a semblance of a return to normality by 1553. The first notarial records appeared in that year; the first of which being dated 28 October. The baptismal records of the *Matrice* start on 27 September 1554. The earliest dated law-suit also comes from that year. It is relevant to note the surnames of the people that appear in these documents; most of them are typically Gozitan. If we break down the surnames that appear on Gozo after 1551 into groups by the year of first occurrence, then we get the following list:

List 1

1551-1556

Amaira, Basili, Beniabin, Bonnici, Calabachi, D'Avola, De Apapis, De Caci, De Laurerio, De Luchia, De Manuelli, De Marino, Madiona, Montagnes, Navarra, Nicolachi, Parnis, Plathamone, Sansuni, Santoro, Theobaldo. (21 surnames)

This first group probably represents the ones that escaped capture altogether or were sufficiently well-off and fortunate enough to be able to arrange redemption soon after capture. With the passage of time more surnames of Gozitans appear. The next list includes those encountered on Gozo in Notarial and Court records wherein they are described as "Gaulitanus", as opposed to "Melitensis" or "Siculus".

List 2

1557-1566

Algaria, Aragonisi, Bacbac, Bernardo, Biscon, Bongibino, Cavallino, Caxaro, Cefai, Cini, Chappisa, Cozullura, Critelli, Dallo, Episcopo, Federico, Frontina, Gaduara, Gamich, Hordob, Kettut, Kinzi, Mannara, Mejlaq, Pontremoli, Refalo, Rigio, Saliba, Vella. (29 surnames)

1567-1576

Anfasino, Balistrera, Barba, Bercax, Bringheli, Castelletta, Chabarra, Ciappara, Cremona, Dandalona, Dejf, Fantino, Ferulla, Gentili, Guarreri, Gurabe, Machnuc, Magro, Mompalao, Sala, Sans, Scotia, Theume, Xiricha. (24 surnames)

1577-1586

Anastasio, Bayada, Barberi, Chumi, Finara, Gauci, Haber, Mintuf, Mochtara, Modlum, Origiles, Scavuni, Vagnolo. (13 surnames)

But other typically Gozitan surnames, albeit not described as such, surface also in the Parochial registers of this period. These include among those not already mentioned:

List 3

Alagona, Bianco, Brunetto, Dolfín, Farmusa, Fontana, Gambino, Mercieca, Sahona, Soria, Xeibe, Xiberras. (12 surnames)

One concludes that the surnames in these lists actually account for most of the surnames appearing in the Crociata List of 1533 as well as for others not figuring there. The ones not accounted for are the following:

List 4

Agueina, Aluisa, Baruni, Bellia, Buhagiar, Calimera, Cap, Cappellano, Cianba, Coleiro, Darmanno, Delia, Ebejer, Falzon, Farrugia, Florentina, Frankinu, Gerardu, Giarda, Lazu, Lazarun, Marinara, Micheli, Mollica, Peregrino, Rekic, Sammut, Xaura, Xluc, Xucula, Zabbar.

One can safely deduce that the people represented by the surnames Agueina, Aluisa, Calimera, Cianba, Gerardu, Giarda, Lazu, Lazarun, Marinara, Xaura, Xluc and Xucula ended their days in slavery as these surnames are never encountered again either in Gozo or in Malta, except occasionally as place-names.

The Captives

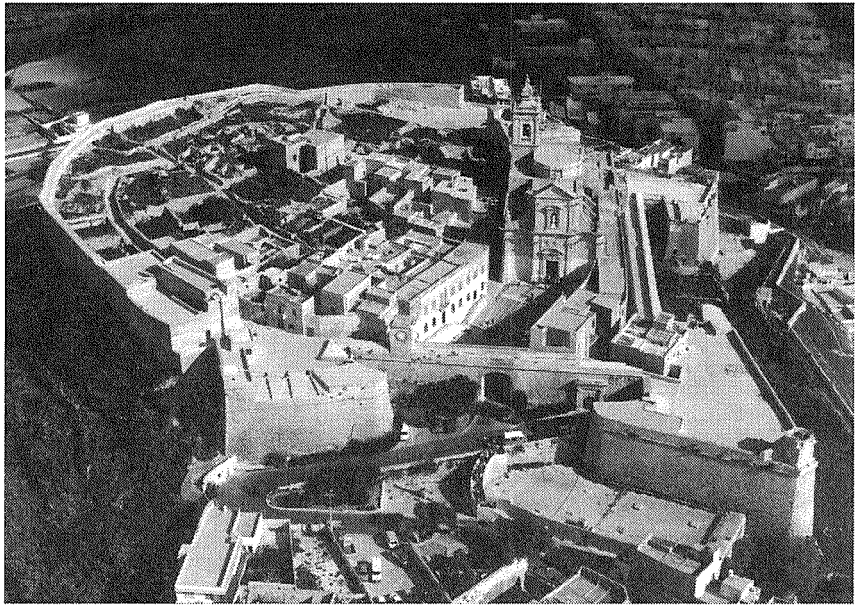
There were, of course, several others with surnames appearing in these lists who were still captives decades after 1551. Yet the fact that practically all pre-1551 surnames actually re-surfaced after the tragedy is rather surprising. By way of explanation, one seeks to quantify Bosio's '*molti*', who in desperation scaled down the sheer north face of the *Castello*. Assuming that these were, in their majority, able-bodied males whose number is some unknown quantity X, considering that some 700 men were taken into slavery, that the total population was around 5,500 and that the ratio of 'able-bodied males' to 'the whole population' is, on average, 1:5, then the resulting straightforward equation yields $X = 500$, approximately. If there were some 500 surname-propagating males on Gozo soon after the catastrophe, then one can conclude that the 100 or so

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surnames listed above must have been in their large majority escapees and that only a small number of male captives, namely the very well-off, were actually redeemed. This thesis finds support from other sources: Professor Wettinger, an expert on slavery, asserts in his doctoral thesis that most of the adult male captives were soon 'used up' at the oars of the large Ottoman fleet of galleys.

Most of the evidence points towards Constantinople as the city whither the Gozitans were dragged and where they languished: In 1565 Federico Fruntina is known to have died in slavery in Constantinople, in 1556 Petrus Salibe tried to redeem his daughter Angela who was in Constantinople. The court-case Critelli vs De Apapis shows that the whole family of Johannes Saliba alias Deydud and his wife Agnes, *née* Critelli, and their four children, all less than 10 in 1551, were in Constantinople; by 1560 Johannes had died in the '*Darmuso delli Captivi del Grand Turco*' of that city. Several of the witnesses at that trial refer to several '*Gozitani captivi come lo detto Joanni morsi in detta turri*'. In a similar case, Fantino vs Ferriolo, a number of witnesses declare that they themselves were taken captives to Constantinople and later freed. One was Don Leone Pontremuli, Canon of the Cathedral, who says he spent 14 years in Constantinople. Another was Franciscus Fantino who did 10 years. Yet another was Andreas Rogiles who states that he spent 18 years '*in Barbaria et in Livanti*'. Andreotta Brancato does not state how long he was in Constantinople. Leonardus Bongibino says that he was unfortunate enough to have returned from captivity just three years before being taken again in 1551.

The Magnifica Domina Damma Rapa must have been fortunate enough to have had enough money to buy herself out by 1555; her will was drawn up by the Gozitan Notary Don Laurentius de Apapis '*apud Civitatem Constantinopolim intus cortile domorum Magnifici Domini Oratoris Sacre Majestatis Domini Regis Francorum*'. Fra Paulus Bayada of the Augustinian Friars was less fortunate; he says that he spent more than 14 years there before being released and that both his parents were then still in captivity. It transpires from a third case, De Nicolachi vs De Manuele, that Petrus De Federico was taken to Constantinople with his family, consisting of his wife Betta and their four children. By 1552 Petrus was already dead and his wife died not long after. Of all the four children that survived till 1560 was Mariana who had reneged her faith.



An aerial view of the *Castello*

Presented in court was a letter written by Petrus De Federico's father, Antonius. He addresses his appeal for redemption to the Grand Master, writing on 23 August 1552 from Gallipoli la Romania; he is known to have died soon afterwards.

Other court proceedings yield the names of several other unransomed captives in Constantinople; among these one encounters Gismundo de Alagona and his sons, Salvus Apap, Johannes Axac, Antonius and Angela Bayada, Guillelmus de Biscon, the sons of Antonius Cavallino, Leonardus Chappara, Paula the wife of Andreas Chappara, Johannes Dallo, Peruna the wife of Andriotta Gambino, Ioannella the widow of Andriotta Gambino, Paulina wife of Dominicus Gambino, Leonardus Gamich, Gregorius Hagius, Antonius Hordob, Antonio wife of Mathias de Manuele, Dianora de Manuele and her daughters Ysabella and Beatrix, Malgarita the widow of Antonius Mercieca, Paulina the wife of Gregorius Mercieca, Ioanna wife of Fridericus Mongebino, Martinus Mule, Ascania wife of Joannes de Nicolachi, Bernardus Parnis, Don Johannes Rapa (Vicar

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Foraneus of Gozo and Canon of the Cathedral), Ioannella the wife of Leonardus Rapa, Matheus Rapa, Margarita Rogiles, Thomasius Said, Decia wife of Matheus Saliba, Imperia Saliba, Paulus Theume, Inigus Vagnolo, Dionysius Vella, Hieronymus Xicalune and Lucas Xiricha.

The case, referred to, of Mariana de Frederico who at the age of 12 reneged her faith, under pressure for survival was not an isolated instance. Another case, quoted by Wettinger, indicates similar accommodating stances as well as points to the fact that some, albeit in a minority, did not end up in Constantinople but were taken to North Africa. The case concerns Paula the wife of Andreas Chappara. Witnesses testify that she was taken to Tagiura together with other Gozitan captives. Eventually she was purchased by a Turk and taken to Tripoli where she became his mistress and bore him various offspring. She eventually became his wife and reneged her faith. This court-case is found in the Bishop's Curia records at the Mdina Cathedral at which archives can also be found records of Church collections that were organized after 1551 to raise funds for the ransom of the Gozitans. The boxes opened in April 1552 were found to contain 51 *uncie*, not a small sum but quite insignificant to deal with the vast proportions of the catastrophe; it could only free at most four captives!

Two months later another 5 *uncie* were collected – Qormi is singled out for its meanness in contributing '*tri parvuli tantum*'. In April 1553, the Cathedral itself provided all of 2 *tari e 2 grani*. Interest in the Gozitans was definitely dwindling, but not interest in their property. The court cases, dragging on for decades, even to the end of the century, show keen interest in the rival parties eager to establish closer degrees of affinity to the poor victims to be appointed trustees, and eventual heirs, of their property. Some of the details are quite unedifying. In this connection, a fragment of a *bando* by Grand Master de la Sengle, dated 14 December 1553, has come to light among these court proceedings:

'...per conservari li beni dili poveri captivi invita ali lor proprii congiunti..che debeano gubernarili como oriundi...[et] anderanno a stari et habitari cum familia in dicta insula como donni di tucti li beni et qualuncha altra possessioni...'

This *bando* may well have been a first prompt that set off the scramble for the acquisition of unclaimed property.

Emigration from Gozo

Returning to the Gozitans that somehow escaped captivity, one gleans from the notarial records that a number of them opted to leave Gozo permanently in the wake of the tragic events. A number of them even went to Sicily and settled there. Among these one can list chronologically: Franciscus Balistrera at Trapani (1558), Paulus Saliba at Licata (1561), Jacobus de li Boffi at Sciacca, Francina Tellerixio at Agrigento and Petrus Rekic at Licata (all in 1562), Petrus Mintuf at Sciacca and Malgarita Malatesta at Nicoxia (both in 1563), Antonius Mintuf at Sciacca (1564), Zaccarias Salibe at Heraclia (1565), Michael de Luchia at Heraclia and the orphaned brothers Dominicus and Salvator Chettut at an unspecified place in Sicily (all in 1568), Petrus Bacbac at Agrigento and Petrus Subtili at Licata (both in 1569), Paulus Hordob at Messina (1570), Magister Angelus Gaduara at Agrigento (1571), Georgius Chini at Trapani and Andriotta Balistrera at Heraclia (1572), Leonardus and Jacoba Barnaba at Sciacca (1577), Francesco Theuma at Xicli (1590), and so on.

One can adduce two main reasons for this mini exodus to Sicily:

- (i) in the wake of 1551 and in view of the looming threat of 1565, the Order issued a number of *bandi* (between 1561 and 1565) encouraging people not useful for combat to evacuate themselves to nearby Sicily;
- (ii) a number of Gozitans, and Maltese for that matter, had family connexions in Sicily.

It is becoming increasingly evident that in pre-1530 years several Sicilians were condemned to exile to these islands and some actually settled here. This was definitely the case of the Castelletti family and must account for a number of Sicilian surnames found here in this period.

Other Gozitans yet looked for safety behind the increasingly strong fortifications of Malta, especially after 1565. Thus, a similar chronological listing would include: Fangius de Manuele at Rabat, Malta (1553), Antonia la Goczitana and Peruna la Goczitana, paupers at Santo Spirito Hospital, Rabat Malta and Antonius Cappello at Mdina (1554), Andreotta Cattut alias Fantin at Birgu (1555), Leonardus Gaduara at Birkirkara (1562), several surnamed Ciangura at Qormi after 1564, Antonius and Antonella de Anfasino at Birgu (1565), Nicolaus Petrus Balistrera

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(1568), the Navarra family (1569), Betta daughter of Manfre *dictu* Dondolana (1570), Johannes de Manuelli alias Mintuf at Senglea (1574), Antonius Guarreri at Burmula (1576), Paulus de li Buffi (probably present-day Boffa) at Senglea (1577), Andreas Amayra at Senglea (1578), Ferdinando de Anastasio at Senglea, Antonius Bonnici at Birgu, and Andreas Sueyde at Valletta (all in 1580), Matheus Mahnuc at Rabat, Malta, and Andreas Guerrer at Senglea (both in 1590), Lucas Saguna at Hal Kbir near Siġġiewi and Johannes Xeibe at Birgu (both in 1591), Thomas Hordob at Birgu (1609) and so on.

Worth noting is the preponderance of Gozitans in Valletta and the Three Cities, a trend that was to continue. The distribution of Gozitan surnames in Malta in 1687 shows that all 16 Fontanas were at Valletta, Each of the surnames Amaira, Cavallino, Fnara and Mintuf was to be found solely at Senglea, Of the 44 Merciecas, 39 were at Cottonera and at nearby Tarxien. Of the 30 Madionas, 12 were at Cottonera and the rest in Valletta. Four of the 5 Bajadas were at Cottonera, 29 out of the 41 Chumis were at Bormla and Senglea, half of the Dandalonas were at Cottonera and 11 out of the 35 Theumas at Birgu. Of considerable linguistic interest are certain speech peculiarities to be found in common between the otherwise unrelated regions of Cottonera and Gozo. Particular reference is made to the uvular pronunciation (*qoph*) common to both and exclusively encountered there in contrast to the glottal stop (?) used in the rest of the island. The persistence of this genuine, original Arabic pronunciation in an area where intense intercourse with foreigners is much more likely to dilute original traits of the language is a very surprising phenomenon indeed. But the one-way Gozitan influx in the sixteenth century goes a long way to explain its presence.

Immigration into Gozo

In contrast with the rather meagre evidence for Gozitan post-1551 presence in Gozo, the records, both notarial and ecclesiastical abound with information about Maltese and Sicilians, especially the former, settling pretty permanently on the island to fill in the vacuum created by the absentee Gozitans. Starting with the foreigners first, each of the individuals in the following chronological listing is described by his locality of origin, usually some town in Sicily, and as *'habitor hujus terre et Insule Gaudisii'*.

List 5

Jacobus Pocurobba Siculus (1557), Antonius de Pixi de Montileone (1561), Joannes Maria Parascandalo Neapolitanus (1567), Jacobus de Lorenzo de Verona and Joannes de Marino de terra Vizini (1568), Nicolaus Cirino Siculus, Antonius Reveddu de Modica, Petrus de Soltano Siculus (1569), Michael Zalubriki and Nicolaus de Sciacca Siculus (1570), Vincentius Chiaramonti Siculus and Vincentius de Xurida Siculus (1571), Santorus Cantedda Siculus, Joannes Cincomani Siculus, Bernardinus de Florina Siculus, Filippus Cuchinella Siculus, Andreas Calimera de terra Raphaudi, Petrus Sudano Neapolitanus and Joannes Fava de Nari (all in 1572), Magister Paulus Straquadaino Modicano, Santorus Cantella Siculus, Matheus Rabbito Siculus and Joannes Allegro Gallicus (all in 1573), Marianus Metaddo de Terra Mohac (1575), Guillelmus Gascon Gallicus (1577), Marianus Metallo Siculus and Bastianus Carnimolla scarparius Syracusanus (1578), Thomas Hernandes Lusitanus, Hieronymus de Gianti Grecus and Franciscus Ziza Siculus de civitate Mohac (1580), Magister Andreas Gliacca Siculus (1583), and so on.

A couple of entries in this list are worth remarking on. The occurrence *Petrus de Soltano Siculus et habitator terre et Insule Gaudisii* both represents the earliest appearance of the common Gozitan surname Sultana as well as answers the enigmatic absence, noted by Wettinger, of this seemingly Semitic surname from medieval lists. A number of other surnames have similarly taken root sufficiently to persist here till today or till quite recently, including Parascandalo, Carnemolla and del Giante. Of particular linguistic interest are the Sicilian surnames Metaddo, Cantedda and Reveddu which soon after their arrival reverted to the non-dialectal forms Metallo, Cantella and Revello respectively, doubtlessly in an effort to integrate better in an alien environment. This kind of cultural pressure that warps and moulds the language manifests itself whenever mutually alien cultural tendencies come into contact. The same phenomenon of accommodation was also evident, for example, in the case of the Gozitan Petrus Rekic (the thin) who, soon after settling in Sicily, changed his surname to the common Sicilian surname Subtili (also meaning, the thin).

But by far the most abundant records relate to Maltese who emigrated to Gozo. The following list includes only those who are known to have settled in Gozo permanently, described as *habitator hujus terre et Insule*

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Gaudisii and excludes those described as, for example, *reperiens in presentiarum hic Gaudisii* or *in presenti hic Gaudisii existens*. The period covered is, in most cases, 1565-1580 and the ordering is by locality of origin.

List 6

Attard: Petrus Flamengo, the son of Leonardus Attardo, Dionysius Vella.

Balzan: Augustinus Mifsud, Pasqualis Grima.

Birkirkara: Jacobus Parnis, Dominica Grillo.

Bisqallin: Thomas Zahra, Marianus Aczuppard.

Bordi: Hieronymus Zarb, Angelus Canchun and family, Joannes Cassano.

Bubaqra: Michael Zammit, Marianus Camilleri.

Dingli: Ambrosius Gambino.

Farrug: Jacobus Chaxixe.

Gharghur: Simon Canchun, Agnes Sammut, Laurentius Bezine, Pancratius Burg.

Ghaxaq: Antonius Bonnici, Leonardus Bonnici.

Gudja: Dominicus Dirbes, Dominicus Vella.

Kbir: Francia Cakie.

Lija: Ioanna Bertelli, Simon Galie, Blasius Vella, Leonardus Attard.

Luqa: Marcus Bisayle, Silvester Bisayle, Paulus Seihel, Nicolaus Vella.

Millieri: Gregorius Camilleri.

Mosta: Johannes Xebirras, Damma Attard, Lemu Xerri, Dominicus Sammut, Leonardus Vella.

Naxxar: Johannes Spiteri, Gregorius Galie, Simon Canchun, Franciscus Zarb, Bendu Spiteri, Leonardus Stivala, Markisia Galata, Ferrandus Fenec, Joanni Portelli, Dominicus Spiteri, Catarina Zambac.

Notabile: Not. Thomas Gauci, Alphonsus Cassar, Gregorius Haius, Michael Ferriolo.

Qormi: Bertus Schembri, Blasius Cardona, Bertus Burg.

Qrendi: Ambrosius Mangion.

Rabat: Paulus Cumbo, Dominicus Debono, Bertus Xeibe, Not. Ferdinandus Ciappara, Ysabella Dusa, *Magister* Vincentius Liftec *ferrarius*, Ioannellus Cumbo, Vincentius Grima, *Magister* Antonius De Guevara.

Safi: Nicolaus Vella.

Siggiewi: Joannes Bonello, Joannes Tabuni, Aloysius Pachi, Dominicus Haxac, Ambrosius Cafor, Andreas Miczi, Petrus Mamo, Marianus Pachi, Joannes Calleya, Zacharias Bonello, Andreas Mamo.

Xluq: Andreas Mangion.

Żebbuġ: Ambrosius Burg *dictus* Tingheire, Petrus Maniun, Andreas Gatt *dictus* Langro, Marcus Attard, Paulus Burg *dictus* nuaitar, Dominicus Zahra, Joannes De Brincat, Marcus Mamo, Simon Burg, Nicolaus Vella, Vincentius Paris.

Żurrieq: Salvus Saliba, Hieronymus Xicalune, Antonius Callus, Vincentius Saliba *manumissus*, Augustus Carcheppo, Joannes Hili, Silvester Habdille, Matheus Saliba, Antonius Micci, Oliverius Micci, Marianus Camilleri, Dominicus Cachie, Dominicus Callus.

Unidentified: *Notarius* Carolus Casha, Antonius Tabuni, Matheus Sapiano, Iorlandus Muscat, Thomas Carbot, Johannes Hagius Galtir, Dominicus Grego, Zacharias Zammit, Simon Zammit, Jacobus de Albano, Antonius Spiteri, Antoninus Haius, Antonius Mallia, Joannes Paulus Bonnici, Marcus Bigeni, Petrus Chantar, Benedictus Mangion, Jacobus Burg, Dominicus Cumbo, Jacobus Xuereb, Dionysius Vella, Stephanus Bigeni, Martinus Mule, Joannes Grima, Philippus Spiteri, Thomas Sammut *dictus* Hudic, Andreas Mellechi, Marianus Vella, Josephus Frendo, Gregorius Hagius, Cosmanus Carcheppo, Ioannes Attard.

From this information one concludes, firstly, that the vast majority of émigrés into Gozo, some 60%, came from just three main regions in Malta: (i) Naxxar, Mosta, Gharghur, (ii) Żebbuġ, Siggiewi, and (iii) Żurrieq, Safi, Qrendi. Secondly, that a time-series analysis of the data shows that the rate of growth of numbers going into Gozo was increasing steadily with a maximum reached c. 1580. Thirdly, that each of the following common Maltese surnames, each of which was totally absent from pre-1551 Gozo, have persisted on Gozo till today as is evidenced by the intervening *Status Animarum* records. These include: Agius, Attard, Azzopardi, Bezzina, Borg, Camilleri, Cassar, Ciantar, Cumbo, Debono, Frendo, Gatt, Grima, Mallia, Mangion, Muscat, Pace, Portelli, Psaila, Schembri, Scicluna, Spiteri and Xuereb.

Motivations

One questions the motivations behind the mass migration of Maltese into Gozo after 1551. One asks whether or not the migrants were prepared to give up the relative safety of Malta for rather unprotected life in Gozo in

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the hope of gaining a reward commensurate with the risk, such as, the acquisition of real estate abandoned by unransomed Gozitans. Much information on this aspect can be gleaned from the notarial records that shed light on the occupations, activities and way of life of the Maltese migrants in Gozo.

Land Ownership

It should be affirmed at the outset that the well-to-do Gozitans who were captured in 1551 soon got themselves ransomed because they held the necessary funds and means to do so. These include such well-known names as De Apapis, De Alagona, Castilletta, Navarra, Plathamone and Pontremoli. Although few in number they commanded most of the landed possessions on the island as can be deduced from their wills and testamentary inventories. Furthermore, there is evidence that those Gozitans who decided to quit for good by settling in Sicily often sold their possessions to other Gozitans, usually kith and kin, who opted to stay. Thus a large number of lands certainly remained directly in Gozitan hands; details are given in the original paper.

It is also apparent from several of the deeds that others, while still in captivity, were holding on to their lands through procurators in Gozo who administered their estates. These procurators were, in practically all cases encountered to date, other Gozitans closely connected to the captives, as after all, was prescribed by De la Sengle's *bando*. The exceptional instances were two in number one of whom, Joannes Haius *dictu* Galtir was married to a Gozitan.

It is more likely that some may have engineered to walk into a fortune by marrying into a well-to-do Gozitan family. Quite a few marriages are recorded at this time in which one party is Gozitan and the other Maltese. From a study of the data, it appears that there is a clear dichotomy between pre-1570 and post-1570 matches. In the former period it is invariably the case that a Maltese girl is marrying a Gozitan man and that the exact opposite is true for the latter. This clearly confirms the obvious fact that in the early days after 1551 Gozitan society was predominantly male with the disparity between the sexes evening out within a couple of decades. It is also apparent that the relatively few marriageable women, who had the whale of a time because much in

demand, went for foreigners and not for Maltese. That males far outnumbered females in the early decades is further confirmed by the disproportionately high number of prostitutes in Gozitan society. In a small community of around 1,400 between 1561 and 1566, no less than 7 so-called *peccatrici* are recorded in the baptismal records as giving birth. It is relevant to note that after 1551 the defence of the *Castello* was given increased attention by the Order and that, consequently, the strength of the military personnel there was augmented. At this time, also, Gozo continued to be used as a place of temporary exile and imprisonment for recalcitrant knights.

Labour

One concludes that the attraction of an easy take-over of property in Gozo could not have been a primary motivation for Maltese migration. In fact, in contrast with the lack of evidence for this hypothesis, a mass of information exists showing that what they were in pursuit of was nothing more remunerative than hard work, mostly agricultural. It is patently clear from List 6 that the localities of origin of the Maltese migrants were the rural areas of Malta, excepting the mere handful from Mdina, to the total exclusion of the Three Cities and, later on, of Valletta as well. That this farming community continued to live by the land on Gozo is evident from innumerable notarial deeds. At one end of the spectrum one encounters those who offered their manual services in the fields and on the estates of well-to-do Gozitans, for a pre-determined stipend and for a fixed term, which contract was often renewed. A typical deed would be:

Hieronymus Zarb de Casali Gadir il Bordi Insule Melite habitator terre et Insule Gaudisii...se obligavit personaliter servire Antonio Gentil Gaulitano...in eius rure pro anno uno continuo et completo incipiendo...

Child labour was not excluded. By our standards an extreme case, but by no means uncommon then, was the typical deed:

Magister Gabriel Bondino faber Melitensis habitator hujus terre et Insule et Gaudisii...conduxit et conducit operas et servitias Salvi Bondino eius filii minoris etatis annorum duodecim...Petro Parnis...in omnibus servitiis rusticis et urbanis pro anno uno...et hoc pro mercede seu verius pro victu, vestitu et el calzaro necessario....

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Another attraction for Maltese farmers was availability of much fertile land in Gozo for short leases (*ingabellatio/qbiela*), usually for four years' duration, again often renewable. Subcontracting was also common. The Maltese farmer leased not only the fields he tilled but also the house he inhabited, sometimes even the flocks of sheep and goats he reared and the stock-yard that housed them. A common arrangement was the establishment of a partnership (*soccida*) between the farmer on the one hand and the owner on the other whereby, for a pre-determined number of years, the owner contributed stock and the farmer contributed labour and management; returns were then divided by agreement. One such typical contract was that signed by the Gozitan Ioannes Refalo and the Maltese Dominicus Spiteri, nicknamed Brundina, who, on 8 November 1568, agreed to form a 2-year partnership in respect of two oxen fit for ploughing, complete with harness and ploughshare. Spiteri bought a half-share off Refalo for 10 uncie; he also contributed half of the seeds required to sow land leased to Refalo. Profits were to be divided equally after first deducting expenses of the lease. It appears that the most a first-generation Maltese farmer in Gozo could aspire to was part-ownership in partnerships of this kind and eventual ownership of flocks and cattle, but not, as shown, land acquisition. This is exemplified by the case of Lemus Xerri, another typical Maltese farmer, whose will was drawn up in 1581. He left his heirs substantial property in livestock but not a single span of land on Gozo.

Conclusion

By way of summing up, one concludes that an appreciable number of Gozitans, predominantly male and certainly more than hitherto claimed, managed to escape the tragic depopulation of Gozo of 1551. Others, in their majority the better off, arranged to get themselves ransomed and found their way back to these islands. Most of these went back to their lands on Gozo, but a sizeable minority took refuge, even permanently, either in Sicily or in Malta, mostly in the Three Cities.

Although not immune to internal strife, typified by the legion of squabbles over property acquisition, as far as outsiders were concerned, the original Gozitan community emerges as a rather compact, closely-knit and closed group, very jealous of its possessions and averse to the

intrusion by Maltese outsiders into their affairs. This is evidenced by the fact that procurators for the enslaved were almost exclusively Gozitan, and that the sale of lands by Gozitans who opted to leave for good was invariably an internal affair, even where go-betweens were concerned. Any penetration of the Gozitan phalanx by Maltese was only achieved, in the long term, by marriage. Yet the small population could not cope with the management of land capable of supporting a far larger community, so that the attraction of Maltese and foreign immigrants to fill this void was inevitable. Again, the roles of Gozitan land-owners and Maltese labourers are seen to be quite distinct and well-defined. In spite of this immigration, the population increased in size only gradually, so that it took about a century to reach the level of 1551.

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